

III. AGAINST THE SOPHISTS

INTRODUCTION

THE tract against the sophists was written, as Isocrates himself tells us in the *Antidosis*,^a at the outset of his career as a teacher,^b and was no doubt issued as an advertisement of the principles and methods of his school. It breaks off, however, just at the point where he proceeds to a more positive exposition of his "philosophy."^c The fragment which has come down to us is mainly an attack upon other systems of education, with barest hints as to his own, and it seems obvious that the purpose of the whole discourse was to set the author sharply apart from the other sophists, with whom he does not wish to be confused.

For a more complete discussion both of his own and other disciplines we must go to the *Antidosis*. Here his criticism is centred upon two classes of sophists, the *Eristics*, who devoted themselves to theorizing in the field of ethics, and the sophists of the rhetorical school, who taught oratory as an instrument of practical success. Of these latter he singles out, finally, for special rebuke the authors of "the so-called arts" (of oratory).

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• About 390 B.C. See Jebb, *Attic Orators* ii. p. 127.

• For Isocrates' use of this word see General Introd. pp. xxvi ff.

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Both classes are called to account because of their impossible pretensions : the former for professing to teach an exact science of happy and successful living and then indulging in captious logomachies which have no relation to life ; the latter for professing to teach the science or art of oratory as if it could be acquired by anyone by rote, regardless of native ability or practical experience, as one learns the letters of the alphabet. Furthermore, the authors of the " arts " might have devoted themselves to a worthy oratory whose end is justice, whereas in fact they emphasized only forensic skill, whose object is to defeat justice.^a

^a For a summary of his criticism of the sophists and of his own views see General Introd. pp. xx ff.

ΚΑΤΑ ΤΩΝ ΣΟΦΙΣΤΩΝ

[291] Εἰ πάντες ἤθελον οἱ παιδεύειν ἐπιχειροῦντες ἀληθῇ λέγειν, καὶ μὴ μείζους ποιεῖσθαι τὰς ὑποσχέσεις ὧν ἔμελλον ἐπιτελεῖν, οὐκ ἂν κακῶς ἤκουον ὑπὸ τῶν ἰδιωτῶν· νῦν δ' οἱ τολμῶντες λίαν ἀπερισκέπτως ἀλαζονεύεσθαι πεποιθήκασιν ὥστε δοκεῖν ἄμεινον βουλευέσθαι τοὺς ῥαθυμεῖν αἰρουμένους τῶν περὶ τὴν φιλοσοφίαν διατριβόντων.

Τίς γὰρ οὐκ ἂν μισήσειεν ἅμα καὶ καταφρονήσειε πρῶτον μὲν τῶν περὶ τὰς ἔριδας διατριβόντων, οἱ προσποιοῦνται μὲν τὴν ἀλήθειαν ζητεῖν, εὐθὺς δ' ἐν ἀρχῇ τῶν ἐπαγγελμάτων ψευδῇ λέγειν ἐπιχειροῦσιν; οἶμαι γὰρ ἅπασιν εἶναι φανερόν ὅτι τὰ μέλλοντα προγιγνώσκειν οὐ τῆς ἡμετέρας φύσεώς ἐστιν, ἀλλὰ τοσοῦτον ἀπέχομεν ταύτης

^a Isocrates regards himself as one of the sophists (see *Antid.* 220), but sets himself apart from the "common herd" of sophists (see *Panath.* 18).

^b Captious argumentation in the field of ethics. He is not thinking of Socrates, who did not teach for pay, nor of Plato's dialectic, which was not yet famous, but of the minor Socratics, especially Antisthenes and Eucleides, who taught for money while affecting contempt for it. In general he is thinking of such quibblers as are later shown up in Plato's *Euthydemus*. See General Introd. pp. xxi ff.

^c Theirs is a cloud morality, not truth to live by on earth. Cf. 20. See General Introd. p. xxii.

^d There is, according to Isocrates, no "science" which

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IF all who are engaged in the profession of education were willing to state the facts instead of making greater promises than they can possibly fulfil, they would not be in such bad repute with the lay-public. As it is, however, the teachers who do not scruple to vaunt their powers with utter disregard of the truth have created the impression that those who choose a life of careless indolence are better advised than those who devote themselves to serious study.

Indeed, who can fail to abhor, yes to condemn, those teachers, in the first place, who devote themselves to disputation,^b since they pretend to search for truth, but straightway at the beginning of their professions attempt to deceive us with lies?^c For I think it is manifest to all that foreknowledge of future events is not vouchsafed to our human nature, but that we are so far removed from this prescience^d

can teach us to do under all circumstances the things which will insure our happiness and success. Life is too complicated for that, and no man can foresee exactly the consequences of his acts—"the future is a thing unseen." All that education can do is to develop a sound judgement (as opposed to knowledge) which will meet the contingencies of life with resourcefulness and, in most cases, with success. This is a fundamental doctrine of his "philosophy" which he emphasizes and echoes again and again in opposition to the professors of a "science of virtue and happiness." See General Introd. pp. xxvii ff.

τῆς φρονήσεως, ὥσθ' Ὅμηρος ὁ μεγίστην ἐπὶ σοφίᾳ δόξαν εἰληφώς καὶ τοὺς θεοὺς πεποίηκεν ἔστιν ὅτε βουλευομένους ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν, οὐ τὴν ἐκείνων γνώμην εἰδώς, ἀλλ' ἡμῖν ἐνδείξασθαι βυλόμενος ὅτι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐν τούτῳ τῶν ἀδυνάτων ἐστίν.

3 Οὗτοι τοίνυν εἰς τοῦτο τόλμης ἐληλύθασιν, ὥστε πειρῶνται πείθειν τοὺς νεωτέρους ὡς, ἣν αὐτοῖς πλησιάζωσιν, ἃ τε πρακτέον ἐστὶν εἴσονται καὶ διὰ ταύτης τῆς ἐπιστήμης εὐδαίμονες γενήσονται. καὶ τηλικούτων ἀγαθῶν αὐτοὺς διδασκάλους καὶ κυρίους καταστήσαντες, οὐκ αἰσχύνονται τρεῖς

4 ἢ τέτταρας μνᾶς ὑπὲρ τούτων αἰτοῦντες. ἀλλ' εἰ μὲν τι τῶν ἄλλων κτημάτων πολλοστοῦ μέρους τῆς ἀξίας ἐπώλουν, οὐκ ἂν ἡμφεσβήτησαν ὡς¹ εὖ φρονοῦντες τυγχάνουσι, σύμπασαν δὲ τὴν ἀρετὴν καὶ τὴν εὐδαιμονίαν οὕτως ὀλίγου τιμῶντες, ὡς νοῦν ἔχοντες διδάσκαλοι τῶν ἄλλων ἀξιοῦσι γίγνεσθαι. καὶ λέγουσι μὲν ὡς οὐδὲν δέονται χρημάτων, ἀργυρίδιον καὶ χρυσίδιον τὸν πλοῦτον ἀποκαλοῦντες, μικροῦ δὲ κέρδους ὀρεγόμενοι μόνον οὐκ ἀθανάτους ὑπισχνοῦνται τοὺς συνόντας

5 ποιήσιν. ὁ δὲ πάντων καταγελαστότατον, ὅτι παρὰ μὲν ὧν δεῖ λαβεῖν αὐτούς, τούτοις μὲν [292] ἀπιστοῦσιν, οἷς μέλλουσι τὴν δικαιοσύνην παραδώσειν, ὧν δ' οὐδεπώποτε διδάσκαλοι γεγόνاسι,

¹ ὡς Γ pr.: ὡς οὐκ Γ₅ΘΛ and most editions.

^a See *Iliad* xvi. 431 ff. and 652 ff.; xxii. 168 ff.

^b Socrates (Plato, *Apology* 20 b) speaks with the same

that Homer, who has been conceded the highest reputation for wisdom, has pictured even the gods as at times debating among themselves about the future ^a—not that he knew their minds but that he desired to show us that for mankind this power lies in the realms of the impossible.

But these professors have gone so far in their lack of scruple that they attempt to persuade our young men that if they will only study under them they will know what to do in life and through this knowledge will become happy and prosperous. More than that, although they set themselves up as masters and dispensers of goods so precious, they are not ashamed of asking for them a price of three or four minae! ^b Why, if they were to sell any other commodity for so trifling a fraction of its worth they would not deny their folly; nevertheless, although they set so insignificant a price on the whole stock of virtue and happiness, they pretend to wisdom and assume the right to instruct the rest of the world. Furthermore, although they say that they do not want money and speak contemptuously of wealth as “filthy lucre,” they hold their hands out for a trifling gain and promise to make their disciples all but immortal! ^c But what is most ridiculous of all is that they distrust those from whom they are to get this money—they distrust, that is to say, the very men to whom they are about to deliver the science of just dealing—and they require that the fees advanced by their students be

sarcasm of a sophist named Evenus, who professed to teach all the virtues necessary to a good man and a good citizen for five minae.

• That is, to make them all but gods.

παρὰ τούτοις τὰ παρὰ τῶν μαθητῶν μεσεγγυοῦνται,
 πρὸς μὲν τὴν ἀσφάλειαν εὖ βουλευόμενοι, τῷ δ'
 6 ἐπαγγέλματι τὰναντία πράττοντες. τοὺς μὲν γὰρ
 ἄλλο τι παιδεύοντας προσήκει διακριβοῦσθαι περὶ
 τῶν διαφερόντων, οὐδὲν γὰρ κωλύει τοὺς περὶ ἕτερα
 δεινοὺς γενομένους μὴ χρηστοὺς εἶναι περὶ τὰ συμ-
 βόλαια· τοὺς δὲ τὴν ἀρετὴν καὶ τὴν σωφροσύνην
 ἐνεργαζομένους πῶς οὐκ ἄλογόν ἐστι μὴ τοῖς μαθη-
 ταῖς μάλιστα πιστεύειν; οὐ γὰρ δή που περὶ τοὺς
 ἄλλους ὄντες καλοὶ καγαθοὶ καὶ δίκαιοι περὶ τού-
 τους ἑξαμαρτήσονται, δι' οὓς τοιοῦτοι γεγόνασιν.

7 Ἐπειδὰν οὖν τῶν ἰδιωτῶν τινες, ἅπαντα ταῦτα
 συλλογισάμενοι, κατίδωσι τοὺς τὴν σοφίαν διδά-
 σκοντας καὶ τὴν εὐδαιμονίαν παραδιδόντας αὐτοὺς
 τε πολλῶν δεομένους καὶ τοὺς μαθητὰς μικρὸν
 πραττομένους, καὶ τὰς ἐναντιώσεις ἐπὶ μὲν τῶν
 λόγων τηροῦντας, ἐπὶ δὲ τῶν ἔργων μὴ καθορῶντας,
 ἔτι δὲ περὶ μὲν τῶν μελλόντων εἰδέναι προσποιου-
 8 μένους, περὶ δὲ τῶν παρόντων μηδὲν τῶν δεόντων
 μήτ' εἰπεῖν μήτε συμβουλευσαι δυναμένους, ἀλλὰ
 μᾶλλον ὁμονοοῦντας καὶ πλείω κατορθοῦντας τοὺς
 ταῖς δόξαις χρωμένους ἢ τοὺς τὴν ἐπιστήμην
 ἔχειν ἐπαγγελλομένους, εἰκότως οἶμαι κατα-
 φρονοῦσι, καὶ νομίζουσιν ἀδολεσχίαν καὶ μικρο-
 λογίαν ἀλλ' οὐ τῆς ψυχῆς ἐπιμέλειαν εἶναι τὰς
 τοιαύτας διατριβάς.

* For their security, they required that the fees charged to their students be deposited with third parties until the end of the course.

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entrusted for safe keeping ^a to those who have never been under their instruction, being well advised as to their security, but doing the opposite of what they preach. For it is permissible to those who give any other instruction to be exacting in matters open to dispute, since nothing prevents those who have been made adept in other lines of training from being dishonourable in the matter of contracts. But men who inculcate virtue and sobriety—is it not absurd if they do not trust in their own students before all others? ^b For it is not to be supposed that men who are honourable and just-dealing with others will be dishonest with the very preceptors who have made them what they are.

When, therefore, the layman puts all these things together and observes that the teachers of wisdom and dispensers of happiness are themselves in great want ^c but exact only a small fee from their students, that they are on the watch for contradictions in words ^d but are blind to inconsistencies in deeds, and that, furthermore, they pretend to have knowledge of the future but are incapable either of saying anything pertinent or of giving any counsel regarding the present, and when he observes that those who follow their judgements are more consistent and more successful ^e than those who profess to have exact knowledge, then he has, I think, good reason to condemn such studies and regard them as stuff and nonsense, and not as a true discipline of the soul.

^b Cf. the same ridicule in Plato, *Gorg.* 519 c, 460 e.

^c See the close of the *Paneg.*

^d The aim of "eristic" (*ἐρισ* means contention) is to show up the contradictions in the accepted morality.

^e See 2, note d; *Panath.* 9; *Helen* 5.

- 9 Οὐ μόνον δὲ τούτοις ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς τοὺς πολι-
 τικοὺς λόγους ὑπισχνουμένοις ἄξιον ἐπιτιμῆσαι
 καὶ γὰρ ἐκεῖνοι τῆς μὲν ἀληθείας οὐδὲν φροντί-
 ζουσιν, ἡγοῦνται δὲ τοῦτ' εἶναι τὴν τέχνην, ἣν ὥς
 πλείστους τῇ μικρότητι τῶν μισθῶν καὶ τῷ
 μεγέθει τῶν ἐπαγγελμάτων προσαγάγωνται καὶ
 λαβεῖν τι παρ' αὐτῶν δυνηθῶσιν· οὕτω δ' ἀναισθή-
 τως αὐτοί τε διάκεινται καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ἔχειν
 ὑπειλήφασιν, ὥστε χεῖρον γράφοντες τοὺς λόγους
 ἢ τῶν ἰδιωτῶν τινες αὐτοσχεδιάζουσιν, ὅμως
 ὑπισχνοῦνται τοιούτους ῥήτορας τοὺς συνόντας
 ποιήσιν ὥστε μηδὲν τῶν ἐνόντων ἐν τοῖς πράγ-
 10 [293] μασι παραλιπεῖν. καὶ ταύτης τῆς δυνάμεως οὐδὲν
 οὔτε ταῖς ἐμπειρίαις οὔτε τῇ φύσει τῇ τοῦ μαθητοῦ
 μεταδιδόασιν, ἀλλὰ φασιν ὁμοίως τὴν τῶν λόγων
 ἐπιστήμην ὥσπερ τὴν τῶν γραμμάτων παρα-
 δώσιν, ὥς μὲν ἔχει τούτων ἑκάτερον, οὐκ ἐξ-
 ετάσαντες, οἰόμενοι δὲ διὰ τὰς ὑπερβολὰς τῶν
 ἐπαγγελμάτων αὐτοί τε θαυμασθήσεσθαι καὶ τὴν
 παιδευσιν τὴν τῶν λόγων πλέονος ἀξίαν δόξειν
 εἶναι, κακῶς εἰδότες ὅτι μεγάλας ποιοῦσι τὰς
 τέχνας οὐχ οἱ τολμῶντες ἀλαζονεύεσθαι περὶ
 αὐτῶν, ἀλλ' οἷτινες ἂν, ὅσον ἔνεστιν ἐν ἑκάστη,
 τοῦτ' ἐξευρεῖν δυνηθῶσιν.
- 11 Ἐγὼ δὲ πρὸ πολλῶν μὲν ἂν χρημάτων ἐτιμησά-
 μην τηλικούτον δύνασθαι τὴν φιλοσοφίαν, ὅσον
 οὗτοι λέγουσιν, ἴσως γὰρ οὐκ ἂν ἡμεῖς πλείστον
 ἀπελείφθημεν, οὐδ' ἂν ἐλάχιστον μέρος ἀπελαύσα-

^a The whole field of "deliberative" oratory, but the most "useful" branch of it in "litigious Athens" was the forensic.

^b Their interest was not in the triumph of justice but in

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But it is not these sophists alone who are open to criticism, but also those who profess to teach political discourse.^a For the latter have no interest whatever in the truth,^b but consider that they are masters of an art if they can attract great numbers of students by the smallness of their charges and the magnitude of their professions and get something out of them. For they are themselves so stupid and conceive others to be so dull that, although the speeches which they compose are worse than those which some laymen improvise, nevertheless they promise to make their students such clever orators that they will not overlook any of the possibilities which a subject affords. More than that, they do not attribute any of this power either to the practical experience or to the native ability of the student, but undertake to transmit the science of discourse as simply as they would teach the letters of the alphabet,^c not having taken trouble to examine into the nature of each kind of knowledge, but thinking that because of the extravagance of their promises they themselves will command admiration and the teaching of discourse will be held in higher esteem—oblivious of the fact that the arts are made great, not by those who are without scruple in boasting about them, but by those who are able to discover all of the resources which each art affords.

For myself, I should have preferred above great riches that philosophy had as much power as these men claim; for, possibly, I should not have been the very last in the profession nor had the least

making “the worse reason appear the better.” See General Introd. p. xxii.

^a See General Introd. p. xxii.

μεν αὐτῆς· ἐπειδὴ δ' οὐχ οὕτως ἔχει, βουλοίμην
 ἂν παύσασθαι τοὺς φλυαροῦντας· ὁρῶ γὰρ οὐ
 μόνον περὶ τοὺς ἐξαμαρτάνοντας τὰς βλασφημίας
 γιγνομένας, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ἅπαντας συν-
 διαβαλλομένους τοὺς περὶ τὴν αὐτὴν διατριβὴν
 ὄντας.

12 Θαυμάζω δ' ὅταν ἴδω τούτους μαθητῶν ἀξιου-
 μένους, οἱ ποιητικοῦ πράγματος τεταγμένην τέχνην
 παράδειγμα φέροντες λελήθασι σφᾶς αὐτούς. τίς
 γὰρ οὐκ οἶδε πλὴν τούτων ὅτι τὸ μὲν τῶν γραμ-
 μάτων ἀκινήτως ἔχει καὶ μένει κατὰ ταῦτόν, ὥστε
 τοῖς αὐτοῖς αἰεὶ περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν χρώμενοι δια-
 τελοῦμεν, τὸ δὲ τῶν λόγων πᾶν τοῦναντίον
 πέπονθεν· τὸ γὰρ ὑφ' ἑτέρου ῥηθὲν τῷ λέγοντι
 μετ' ἐκείνον οὐχ ὁμοίως χρήσιμόν ἐστιν, ἀλλ'
 οὗτος εἶναι δοκεῖ τεχνικώτατος, ὅς τις ἂν ἀξίως
 μὲν λέγῃ τῶν πραγμάτων, μηδὲν δὲ τῶν αὐτῶν

13 τοῖς ἄλλοις εὐρίσκειν δύνηται. μέγιστον δὲ σημεῖον
 τῆς ἀνομοιότητος αὐτῶν· τοὺς μὲν γὰρ λόγους
 οὐχ οἰόντε καλῶς ἔχειν, ἣν μὴ τῶν καιρῶν καὶ τοῦ
 πρεπόντως καὶ τοῦ καινῶς ἔχειν μετάσχωσιν,
 τοῖς δὲ γράμμασιν οὐδενὸς τούτων προσεδέησεν.
 ὥσθ' οἱ χρώμενοι τοῖς τοιούτοις παραδείγμασι
 πολὺ ἂν δικαιότερον ἀποτίνοιεν ἢ λαμβάνοιεν
 ἀργύριον, ὅτι πολλῆς ἐπιμελείας αὐτοὶ δεόμενοι
 παιδεύειν τοὺς ἄλλους ἐπιχειροῦσιν.

14 Εἰ δὲ δεῖ μὴ μόνον κατηγορεῖν τῶν ἄλλων ἀλλὰ
 [294] καὶ τὴν ἑμαυτοῦ δηλῶσαι διάνοιαν, ἡγοῦμαι

^a Cf. *Antid.* 168.

^b That is, mechanical formulas are not sufficient. There must be inventiveness, resourcefulness, in a word, creative imagination.

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share in its profits. But since it has no such power, I could wish that this prating might cease. For I note that the bad repute which results therefrom does not affect the offenders only, but that all the rest of us who are in the same profession share in the opprobrium.^a

But I marvel when I observe these men setting themselves up as instructors of youth who cannot see that they are applying the analogy of an art with hard and fast rules to a creative process. For, excepting these teachers, who does not know that the art of using letters remains fixed and unchanged, so that we continually and invariably use the same letters for the same purposes, while exactly the reverse is true of the art of discourse? ^b For what has been said by one speaker is not equally useful for the speaker who comes after him; on the contrary, he is accounted most skilled in this art who speaks in a manner worthy of his subject and yet is able to discover in it topics which are nowise the same as those used by others. But the greatest proof of the difference between these two arts is that oratory is good only if it has the qualities of fitness for the occasion,^c propriety of style, and originality of treatment, while in the case of letters there is no such need whatsoever. So that those who make use of such analogies ought more justly to pay out than to accept fees, since they attempt to teach others when they are themselves in great need of instruction.

However, if it is my duty not only to rebuke others, but also to set forth my own views, I think

^a A fundamental requisite. See *Paneg.* 9; *Helen* 11, Vol. III., L.C.L.

- πάντας ἄν μοι τοὺς εὖ φρονοῦντας συνειπεῖν ὅτι πολλοὶ μὲν τῶν φιλοσοφησάντων ἰδιῶται διετέλεσαν ὄντες, ἄλλοι δέ τινες οὐδενὶ πώποτε συγγενόμενοι τῶν σοφιστῶν καὶ λέγειν καὶ πολιτεύεσθαι δεινοὶ γεγόνασιν. αἱ μὲν γὰρ δυνάμεις καὶ τῶν λόγων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἔργων ἀπάντων ἐν τοῖς εὐφυέσιν ἐγγίγνονται καὶ τοῖς περὶ τὰς ἐμπειρίας γεγυμ-
15 νασμένοις· ἡ δὲ παιδείεις τοὺς μὲν τοιούτους τεχνικωτέρους καὶ πρὸς τὸ ζητεῖν εὐπορωτέρους ἐποίησεν, οἷς γὰρ νῦν ἐντυγχάνουσι πλανώμενοι, ταῦτ' ἐξ ἐτοιμοτέρου λαμβάνειν αὐτοὺς ἐδίδαξεν, τοὺς δὲ καταδεεστέραν τὴν φύσιν ἔχοντας ἀγωνιστὰς μὲν ἀγαθοὺς ἢ λόγων ποιητὰς οὐκ ἂν ἀποτελέσειεν, αὐτοὺς δ' ἂν αὐτῶν προαγάγοι καὶ πρὸς πολλὰ φρονιμωτέρως διακεῖσθαι ποιήσειεν.
- 16 Βούλομαι δ', ἐπειδὴ περ εἰς τοῦτο προῆλθον, ἔτι σαφέστερον εἰπεῖν περὶ αὐτῶν. φημὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ τῶν μὲν ἰδεῶν, ἐξ ὧν τοὺς λόγους ἅπαντας καὶ λέγομεν καὶ συντίθεμεν, λαβεῖν τὴν ἐπιστήμην οὐκ εἶναι τῶν πάνυ χαλεπῶν, ἣν τις αὐτὸν παραδῶ μὴ τοῖς ῥαδίως ὑπισχνουμένοις ἀλλὰ τοῖς εἰδόσι τι περὶ αὐτῶν· τὸ δὲ τούτων ἐφ' ἑκάστῳ τῶν πραγμάτων ὥς δεῖ προελέσθαι καὶ μῖξαι πρὸς ἀλλήλας καὶ τάξαι κατὰ τρόπον, ἔτι δὲ τῶν καιρῶν μὴ διαμαρτεῖν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς ἐνθυμήμασι πρεπόντως ὅλον τὸν λόγον καταποικίλαι καὶ τοῖς
17 ὀνόμασιν εὐρύθμως καὶ μουσικῶς εἰπεῖν, ταῦτα δὲ πολλῆς ἐπιμελείας δεῖσθαι καὶ ψυχῆς ἀνδρικῆς

^a Isocrates himself.

^b Isocrates insists that the requisites of a good orator are first natural ability, second practical experience, and

all intelligent people will agree with me that while many of those who have pursued philosophy have remained in private life,^a others, on the other hand, who have never taken lessons from any one of the sophists have become able orators and statesmen. For ability, whether in speech or in any other activity, is found in those who are well endowed by nature and have been schooled by practical experience.^b Formal training makes such men more skilful and more resourceful in discovering the possibilities of a subject; for it teaches them to take from a readier source the topics which they otherwise hit upon in haphazard fashion. But it cannot fully fashion men who are without natural aptitude into good debaters or writers, although it is capable of leading them on to self-improvement and to a greater degree of intelligence on many subjects.

But I desire, now that I have gone this far, to speak more clearly on these matters. For I hold that to obtain a knowledge of the elements out of which we make and compose all discourses is not so very difficult if anyone entrusts himself, not to those who make rash promises, but to those who have some knowledge of these things. But to choose from these elements those which should be employed for each subject, to join them together, to arrange them properly, and also, not to miss what the occasion demands but appropriately to adorn the whole speech with striking thoughts and to clothe it in flowing and melodious phrase^c—these things, I hold, require much study and are the task third formal training. See *Antid.* 186-188 and General Introd. p. xxvii, Vol. I., L.C.L.

^a Prose should have the same finish and charm as poetry. See General Introd. p. xxiv.

- καὶ δοξαστικῆς ἔργον εἶναι, καὶ δεῖν τὸν μὲν μαθητὴν πρὸς τῷ τὴν φύσιν ἔχειν οἷαν χρὴ τὰ μὲν εἶδη τὰ τῶν λόγων μαθεῖν, περὶ δὲ τὰς χρήσεις αὐτῶν γυμνασθῆναι, τὸν δὲ διδάσκαλον τὰ μὲν οὕτως ἀκριβῶς οἰόντ' εἶναι διελθεῖν ὥστε μηδὲν τῶν διδακτῶν παραλιπεῖν, περὶ δὲ τῶν λοιπῶν
- 18 τοιοῦτον αὐτὸν παράδειγμα παρασχεῖν, ὥστε τοὺς ἐκτυπωθέντας καὶ μιμήσασθαι δυναμένους εὐθὺς ἀνθηρότερον καὶ χαριέστερον τῶν ἄλλων φαίνεσθαι λέγοντας. καὶ τούτων μὲν ἀπάντων συμπεσόντων
- [295] τελείως ἔξουσιν οἱ φιλοσοφοῦντες· καθ' ὃ δ' ἂν ἐλλειφθῇ τι τῶν εἰρημένων, ἀνάγκη ταύτῃ χεῖρον διακεῖσθαι τοὺς πλησιάζοντας.
- 19 Οἱ μὲν οὖν ἄρτι τῶν σοφιστῶν ἀναφυόμενοι καὶ νεωστὶ προσπεπτωκότες ταῖς ἀλαζονείαις, εἰ καὶ νῦν πλεονάζουσιν, εὖ οἶδ' ὅτι πάντες ἐπὶ ταύτῃ κατενεχθήσονται τὴν ὑπόθεσιν. λοιποὶ δ' ἡμῖν εἰσιν οἱ πρὸ ἡμῶν γερόμενοι καὶ τὰς καλουμένας τέχνας γράψαι τολμήσαντες, οὓς οὐκ ἀφετέον ἀνεπιτιμήτους· οἳ τινες ὑπέσχοντο δικάζεσθαι διδάξειν, ἐκλεξάμενοι τὸ δυσχερέστατον τῶν ὀνομάτων, ὃ τῶν φθονούντων ἔργον ἦν λέγειν, ἀλλ' οὐ τῶν προεστώτων τῆς τοιαύτης παιδείας,
- 20 καὶ ταῦτα τοῦ πράγματος, καθ' ὅσον ἐστὶ διδακτόν,

^a Unmistakably this phrase is parodied in Plato, *Gorgias* 463 A: δοκεῖ τοίνυν μοι, ὦ Γοργία, εἶναι τι ἐπιτήδευμα τεχνικὸν μὲν οὐ, ψυχῆς δὲ στοχαστικῆς καὶ ἀνδρείας καὶ φύσει δεινῆς προσομιλεῖν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις.

^b The sophists before mentioned. The teaching of the older sophists is discussed in the *Antidosis*.

^c Especially the first to write such treatises, Corax and Tisias of Syracuse. τέχνη, like *ars* in Latin, was the accepted term for a treatise on rhetoric.

AGAINST THE SOPHISTS, 17-20

of a vigorous and imaginative mind :^a for this, the student must not only have the requisite aptitude but he must learn the different kinds of discourse and practise himself in their use ; and the teacher, for his part, must so expound the principles of the art with the utmost possible exactness as to leave out nothing that can be taught, and, for the rest, he must in himself set such an example of oratory that the students who have taken form under his instruction and are able to pattern after him will, from the outset, show in their speaking a degree of grace and charm which is not found in others. When all of these requisites are found together, then the devotees of philosophy will achieve complete success ; but according as any one of the things which I have mentioned is lacking, to this extent must their disciples of necessity fall below the mark.

Now as for the sophists who have lately sprung up and have very recently embraced these pretensions,^b even though they flourish at the moment, they will all, I am sure, come round to this position. But there remain to be considered those who lived before our time and did not scruple to write the so-called arts of oratory.^c These must not be dismissed without rebuke, since they professed to teach how to conduct law-suits, picking out the most discredited of terms,^d which the enemies, not the champions, of this discipline might have been expected to employ—and that too although this facility, in so far as it can be taught, is of no greater aid to

^a Again and again Isocrates expresses his repugnance to this kind of oratory, and in general it was in bad odour. The precepts of Corax (Crow), for example, were called "the bad eggs of the bad Corax."

οὐδὲν μᾶλλον πρὸς τοὺς δικανικοὺς λόγους ἢ πρὸς τοὺς ἄλλους ἅπαντας ὠφελεῖν δυναμένου. τοσοῦτω δὲ χείρους ἐγένοντο τῶν περὶ τὰς ἔριδας καλινδουμένων, ὅσον οὗτοι μὲν τοιαῦτα λογίδια διεξιόντες, οἷς εἴ τις ἐπὶ τῶν πράξεων ἐμμείνειεν εὐθὺς ἂν ἐν πᾶσιν εἴη κακοῖς, ὅμως ἀρετὴν ἐπηγγείλαντο καὶ σωφροσύνην περὶ αὐτῶν, ἐκεῖνοι δ' ἐπὶ τοὺς πολιτικοὺς λόγους παρακαλοῦντες, ἀμελήσαντες τῶν ἄλλων τῶν προσόντων αὐτοῖς ἀγαθῶν, πολυπραγμοσύνης καὶ πλεονεξίας ὑπέστησαν εἶναι διδάσκαλοι.

21 Καίτοι τοὺς βουλομένους πειθαρχεῖν τοῖς ὑπὸ τῆς φιλοσοφίας ταύτης προσταττομένοις πολὺ ἂν θᾶττον πρὸς ἐπιείκειαν ἢ πρὸς ῥητορείαν ὠφελήσειεν. καὶ μηδεὶς οἰέσθω με λέγειν ὥς ἔστι δικαιοσύνη διδακτόν. ὅλως μὲν γὰρ οὐδεμίαν ἡγοῦμαι τοιαύτην εἶναι τέχνην, ἥτις τοῖς κακῶς πεφυκόσι πρὸς ἀρετὴν σωφροσύνην ἂν καὶ δικαιοσύνην ἐμποιήσειεν. οὐ μὲν ἄλλὰ συμπαρακελεύσασθαι γε καὶ συνασκήσαι μάλιστα ἂν οἶμαι τὴν τῶν λόγων τῶν πολιτικῶν ἐπιμέλειαν.

22 Ἵνα δὲ μὴ δοκῶ τὰς μὲν τῶν ἄλλων ὑποσχέσεις διαλύειν, αὐτὸς δὲ μείζω λέγειν τῶν ἐνόντων, ἐξ ὧν περ αὐτὸς ἐπείσθην οὕτω ταῦτ' ἔχειν, ῥαδίως οἶμαι καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις φανερόν καταστήσειν.

• The same complaint is made by Aristotle, *Rhet.* i. 1. 10.

• For the kind of political discourse which Isocrates

forensic than to all other discourse. But they were much worse than those who dabble in disputation; for although the latter expounded such captious theories that were anyone to cleave to them in practice he would at once be in all manner of trouble, they did, at any rate, make professions of virtue and sobriety in their teaching, whereas the former, although exhorting others to study political discourse, neglected all the good things which this study affords, and became nothing more than professors of meddlesomeness and greed.^a

And yet those who desire to follow the true precepts of this discipline may, if they will, be helped more speedily towards honesty of character^b than towards facility in oratory. And let no one suppose that I claim that just living can be taught; ^c for, in a word, I hold that there does not exist an art of the kind which can implant sobriety and justice in depraved natures. Nevertheless, I do think that the study of political discourse can help more than any other thing to stimulate and form such qualities of character.

But in order that I may not appear to be breaking down the pretensions of others while myself making greater claims than are within my powers, I believe that the very arguments by which I myself was convinced will make it clear to others also that these things are true.

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extols, and its ethical influence see *Antid.* 275 and General
 Introd. p. xxiv. • See *Antid.* 274 ff.